

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1414

To amend the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act to require State academic assessments of student achievement in United States history and civics, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 16, 2007

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To amend the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act to require State academic assessments of student achievement in United States history and civics, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “American History and  
5       Civics Achievement Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds that—

1           (1) the 2006 National Assessment of Edu-  
2           cational Progress assessments in United States his-  
3           tory and civics demonstrated high percentages of  
4           students scoring below basic even though there were  
5           increases in scores, particularly for lower-performing  
6           students, compared to previous such assessments;

7           (2) in the 2006 National Assessment of Edu-  
8           cational Progress assessment in United States his-  
9           tory—

10               (A) 30 percent of students in grade 4  
11               scored below basic, 35 percent of students in  
12               grade 8 scored below basic, and 53 percent of  
13               students in grade 12 scored below basic;

14               (B) a 31 point achievement gap exists for  
15               students in grade 4 who are from low-income  
16               families, as compared to students in grade 4  
17               who are from high-income families, a 32 point  
18               achievement gap exists between black and white  
19               students in grade 4, and a 30 point achieve-  
20               ment gap exists between white and Hispanic  
21               students in grade 4;

22               (C) 86 percent of students in grade 12  
23               could not explain a reason for United States in-  
24               volvement in the Korean War;

1 (D) 99 percent of students in grade 8  
2 could not explain how the fall of the Berlin  
3 Wall affected United States foreign policy; and

4 (E) 76 percent of students in grade 4  
5 could not explain why early American pioneers  
6 settled on the western frontier;

7 (3) in the 2006 National Assessment of Edu-  
8 cational Progress assessment in the United States  
9 civics—

10 (A) 27 percent of students in grade 4  
11 scored below basic, 30 percent of students in  
12 grade 8 scored below basic, and 34 percent of  
13 students in grade 12 scored below basic;

14 (B) a 29 point achievement gap exists for  
15 students in grade 4 who are from low-income  
16 families, as compared to students in grade 4  
17 who are from high-income families, a 25 point  
18 achievement gap exists between black and white  
19 students in grade 4, and a 26 point achieve-  
20 ment gap exists between white and Hispanic  
21 students in grade 4;

22 (C) 72 percent of students in grade 8  
23 could not explain the historical purpose of the  
24 Declaration of Independence; and

1 (D) 57 percent of students in grade 12  
 2 were unable to describe the meaning of fed-  
 3 eralism in the United States;

4 (4) America’s past encompasses great leaders  
 5 and great ideas that contribute to our shared herit-  
 6 age and to the principles of freedom, equality, jus-  
 7 tice, and opportunity for all;

8 (5) an appreciation for the defining events in  
 9 our Nation’s history can be a catalyst for civic in-  
 10 volvement; and

11 (6) the strength of American democracy and  
 12 our standing in the world depend on ensuring that  
 13 our children have a strong understanding of our Na-  
 14 tion’s past.

15 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF**  
 16 **EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AUTHORIZATION**  
 17 **ACT.**

18 Section 303(b) of the National Assessment of Edu-  
 19 cational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C. 9622(b))  
 20 is amended—

21 (1) in paragraph (2)(D), by inserting “(with a  
 22 priority in conducting assessments in history not less  
 23 frequently than once every 4 years)” after “subject  
 24 matter”; and

25 (2) in paragraph (3)(A)—

1 (A) in clause (iii)—

2 (i) by inserting “except as provided in  
3 clause (iv),” before “may conduct”; and

4 (ii) by striking “and” after the semi-  
5 colon;

6 (B) by redesignating clause (iv) as clause  
7 (v); and

8 (C) by inserting after clause (iii) the fol-  
9 lowing:

10 “(iv) shall conduct trial State aca-  
11 demic assessments of student achievement  
12 in United States history in grades 8 and  
13 12 in not less than 10 States representing  
14 geographically diverse regions of the  
15 United States and in civics in grades 8 and  
16 12 in not less than 10 States representing  
17 geographically diverse regions of the  
18 United States (with a priority given to con-  
19 ducting assessments in United States his-  
20 tory); and”.

21 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD.**

22 Section 302(e)(1) of the National Assessment of  
23 Educational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C.  
24 9621(e)(1)) is amended—

1           (1) in subparagraph (I), by striking “and” after  
2     the semicolon;

3           (2) by redesignating subparagraph (J) as sub-  
4     paragraph (K);

5           (3) in the flush matter at the end, by striking  
6     “subparagraph (J)” and inserting “subparagraph  
7     (K)”; and

8           (4) by inserting after subparagraph (I) the fol-  
9     lowing:

10                   “(J) in consultation with the Commissioner  
11                   for Education Statistics, identify and select the  
12                   States that will participate in the trial State  
13                   academic assessments described in section  
14                   303(b)(3)(A)(iv); and”.

15     **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

16           Section 305 of the National Assessment of Edu-  
17     cational Progress Authorization Act (20 U.S.C. 9624) is  
18     amended—

19           (1) by redesignating subsection (b) as sub-  
20     section (c); and

21           (2) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-  
22     lowing:

23           “(b) HISTORY AND CIVICS ASSESSMENTS.—There  
24     are authorized to be appropriated—

1           “(1) \$7,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008  
2           and 2009 to carry out sections 303(b)(3)(A)(iv) and  
3           302(e)(1), of which not more than \$500,000 for  
4           each fiscal year shall be available to carry out sec-  
5           tion 302(e)(1); and

6           “(2) such sums as may be necessary to carry  
7           out such sections for each succeeding fiscal year.”.

8   **SEC. 6. CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**

9           Section 113(a)(1) of the Education Sciences Reform  
10   Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9513(a)(1)) is amended by strik-  
11   ing “section 302(e)(1)(J)” and inserting “section  
12   302(e)(1)(K)”.

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